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# Perceptions and Occurrences of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

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PERCEPTIONS AND OCCURRENCES OF  
RELATIONSHIP ABUSE AND  
SEXUAL ASSAULT

By

Jessica Parenteau

An Honors Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Honors

in

The Program of Justice Studies, Department of Sociology

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Rhode Island College

2014

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## **Abstract**

Previous research illustrates that college age students experience relationship abuse and sexual assault. I test lifestyle-routine activities theory to determine how college students perceive non-stranger relationship abuse and/or sexual assault and if both are occurring on a college campus, off a college campus, or through technology, including social media. Like previous studies, this one found that alcohol played a role in victimization. Also, more male participants than female participants were likely to be harassed through social media than in actual physical locations, such as at a bar or a private party. Findings from this study show that both women and men experience cyber-stalking/cyber-harassment, and that the use of social media is a predictor of coercive tactics. This study contributes to the literature by acknowledging the limitations of lifestyle-routine activities theory. Despite its wide applicability, it failed to adequately explain social media's effect on relationship abuse and sexual assault.

## **Introduction**

To what degree is sexual assault and relationship abuse happening at Rhode Island College? Approximately 508 Justice Studies and Sociology major and minors were asked to participate in a survey to seek answers to this broad question during September/October 2014. Despite its distribution, there were only 72 responses, making data for the study limited. The data were downloaded in software programs and frequency tables were run to provide descriptive and predictive statistics. The results of this study show that men and women may not perceive relationship abuse differently. Findings show that both men and women experience cyber-stalking/cyber-harassment, and that the use of social media is a predictor of coercive tactics, such as stopping a partner from going out with their friends or going to school, and humiliating a partner. This study contributes to the literature of lifestyle-routine activities theory because the theory has not been used before to explain social media's effect on relationship abuse and sexual assault.

## **Literature Review**

Relationship abuse and sexual assault happen on many college campuses across the country (Fisher, Dagle and Cullen 2010). Prior research shows how relationship abuse and sexual assault among college students is prevalent (Miller 2011; Fisher, Cullen and Turner 2000). In the first study of its kind on stalking and sexual victimization, Fisher (2000) established that many college women do not think of themselves as victims or do not think what happened to them was serious enough to report. Fisher (2010) later reported that women can be the victims of multiple acts of sexual assault as well (Fisher, Daigle & Cullen 2010).

It is my hypothesis that lesser types of non-stranger victimization is significant and under-reported among this college community. What makes this study unique is that I examine relationship abuse in addition to criminal activity like non-stranger sexual assault and lesser forms of relationship abuse that fall below the threshold of police involvement.

The approach to this study is to survey a sample of 508 Justice Studies and Sociology major and minors to discover their perception on relationship abuse and/or sexual assault and the prevalence that relationship abuse and/or sexual assault may occur between them by using lifestyle-routine activity theory. Lifestyle-routine activity theory has four different components to explain why a person may experience victimization. Following Fisher, Daigle & Cullen's (2010) study of sexual victimization, the components of lifestyle-routine activity theory are motivated offenders, suitable targets, limited guardianship, and exposure to crime.

### *Relationship Abuse*

Research suggests that relationship abuse is not uncommon among college students (Miller 2011). Relationship abuse has historic roots in men using power over women because of various aspects of life, including the social construction of gender (Pence and Dasgupta 2006). Prior research shows that women experience intimate partner violence and relationship abuse more than men do (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000). Studies show “that 13% to 42% of college students have experienced and/or perpetrated physical violence in a pre-marital dating relationship at least once” (Miller 2011: 71). It may be suggested that college students do not perceive what is happening in their relationship to be acts of abuse. Another research study suggests that relationship abuse has become normalized behavior in society, and this is why adolescents, college students, and other young adults may not perceive what is happening to them as relationship abuse (Hlavka 2014).

Interestingly, and in opposition to many common beliefs, other studies show that women are more commonly the perpetrators of physical violence against an intimate partner than men against women (Miller 2011; Leisring 2013). Leisring (2013) found that 95% of women reported that they have used emotional abuse against an intimate partner, and that they used physical abuse 11% of the time. A recent study also examines the reasons why women use emotional and physical abuse toward an intimate partner - and their answers as to why range from anger and retaliation to feeling emotionally hurt and unable to express themselves. Miller’s (2011) study also showed results that women reported higher rates of perpetration of abuse at the college level.

### *Sexual Assault*

Sexual Assault is prevalent in the United States and it is even more prevalent in college communities. In 2008 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that approximately a quarter of women in college reported experience sexual assault or rape. Most rape perpetrators were reported as intimate partners, family members, or acquaintances (CDC 2008). In the state of Rhode Island, there were 301 rape reports, 59 sodomy reports, and 281 forcible fondling reports (UCR Rhode Island 2012). The UCR for Rhode Island is further broken down into towns and cities. Providence reported 90 rape reports, 14 sodomy reports, and 51 forcible fondling reports (UCR Rhode Island 2012). The College where this research was conducted only had two reported cases of forcible sex offenses from 2010 to 2012. This is the lowest amount of sex offenses for the major colleges and universities in Rhode Island. Yet, it is also true that the College may have hidden some of these statistics based on information obtained in this survey. The danger in inaccurate reporting is paradoxical: if the college community knows the numbers are not accurate then that might encourage a greater sense of insecurity rather than security.

There is a wealth of research about sexual assault among college students. Prior research focuses on sexual assault of college women. The “data from the U.S Department of Justice National Crime Victimization Survey found that only 38% of the 200,780 women who experience a rape or sexual assault from 2004 to 2005 reported that assault to the police” (Cleere and Lynn 2013: 2594). Cleere and Lynn (2013) asked the question of how women who acknowledge sexual assault and how women who do not acknowledge sexual assault differ. They found that women who do acknowledge sexual assault were more likely to have suffered a more severe act of assault; they report their

assailant, press charges, and report that they did not have a romantic relationship with their attacker (Cleere and Lynn 2013).

Sexual assault on college campuses is now a major topic in the United States. The federal government, politicians, celebrities, women's rights centers, and more advocacy agencies have brought this issue into the spotlight. It has made national news with the launch of NotAlone.gov and the It's On Us Campaign. The President backs both of these programs, and the White House has launched an investigation of fifty-five schools across the nation based on violation of Title IX (NotAlone.gov). Title IX is a federal law from the Education Amendments of 1972 that "protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities which receive Federal financial assistance" (NotAlone.gov). Title IX protects against sexual violence and harassment. California, for example, which is home to schools that are under investigation, has just had a bill signed by its governor. The bill clearly outlines what consent means and is the first law of its kind in the United States. Now it is not enough for implied consent or to say no. There must be clear "yes" given for sexual contact to occur (Chaphill 2014). Research should be done to see if these laws and programs will have an effect on college and university campuses.

### *Cyber-stalking/Stalking*

Relationship abuse and sexual assault can sometimes involve stalking as part of the harassment or escalate into more dangerous confrontations. According to the Supplemental Victimization Survey (SVS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) stalking is prevalent in the United States (Reyns, Henson and Fisher 2012). Buam et al. (2009) found that "Approximately 14 of every 1,000 persons age 18 or older



in the United States were victims of stalking in the 12 months preceding the survey” (Reyns, Henson and Fisher 2012: 3) A prior research study also suggests that college students, mainly females, are at a higher risk of being stalking victims. Stalking is perpetrated typically by someone whom the victim knows or had some type of relationship with (Reyns, Henson and Fisher 2012). College students also are more likely to be perpetrators of stalking. Recent studies done with undergraduate students show that “40% of respondents engaged in at least one stalking behavior following a break up of a romantic relationship” (Reyns, Henson and Fisher 2012: 4).

Cyber-stalking, which has become more prevalent today, has not been studied as widely. The Internet and the social media sites are everyday sources of a college student’s experience, and this lends itself to another form of potential victimization. Cyber-stalking or cyber-harassment can be defined as “sending unsolicited or threatening emails, posting hostile Internet messages, and obtaining personal information about the victim without his or her consent” (Melander 2010: 263). Reyns *et al.* (2012) says that people engage in and become victims of cyber-stalking every day. This behavior is not taken as seriously as physicalstalking because people feel less threatened virtually and can control this type of harassment. Reyns (2010) says cyber-harassment usually involves emails, instant messages, and other forms of social media. Reyns *et al.* (2012) reports that social media can affect how the victim perceives what is happening to them and conducted a study about cyber-stalking at an urban university to show who are victims of cyber-stalking and who are perpetrators of cyber-stalking. The results show that more females were cyber-stalked, but males do experience threats of violence and cyber-stalking, too. Results from their study also show that, non-heterosexuals and non-white

students experienced more cyber-stalking than white and heterosexual students (Reyns, Henson and Fisher 2012).

### *Alcohol and Drugs*

Alcohol and drugs are involved with most cases of relationship abuse and sexual assault. Cleere and Lynn (2013) found “that the great majority of women who endorse an unwanted sexual experience also reported that they were intoxicated at the time” (Cleere and Lynn 2013: 2604). This inclusion of alcohol and/or drugs can often hide the seriousness of the event and make it less likely that the victim, college administrators, or the police, will address it. Other studies also found that first-year college students are more at risk for sexual assault and rape because of the binge drinking that they may engage in as they become exposed to college parties and lack of adult supervision (Belknap 2007; van Wormer and Davis 2008).

### *Lifestyle-Routine Activity Theory*

Lifestyle-routine activity theory comes from lifestyle theory and routine activity theory. Routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson 1979) describes how direct contact predatory offenses occur. Routine activity theory uses three key elements, motivated offenders, suitable targets, and limited guardianship to explain why crime may occur. Lifestyle theory explains victimization by acknowledging that some lifestyles expose people to more risks than do other lifestyles, and this concept can be applied to college-age students who use social media outlets for routine communication. A more common example of lifestyle theory is that victimization occurs due to their everyday living circumstances. For example, undergraduates who live on and off campus but not with their parents may experience greater risk of sexual assault and intimate partner violence

than do others who are partnered, live with their parents, or work full-time (Fisher, Daigle & Cullen 2010). Lifestyle-routine activity theory suggests that the lifestyle of a person can cause a greater propensity to be victimized because of their activities and environment in which they live or work. Fisher et al. (2002) says that:

The typical lifestyle of college women is such that they come into regular contact with young men - both in class and in recreational settings, during the day and at night, in public and in private locations, and often without much guardianship. Lifestyle-activity theory would predict that these relationships would inevitably produce a high rate of sexual victimization among people who know one another (Fisher, Cullen and Turner 2002: 294).

Fisher (2006) says that lifestyle-routine activity theory has been used to explain victimization of females and males on college campuses.

#### *Motivated Offenders*

College students' lifestyles, and more particularly, women students' lifestyles, place them in situations where there could be potential motivated offenders of sexual victimization. College students who live on or off campus who are in close proximity with others may not think that the people around them could victimize them. Fisher *et al* (2010) conducted a study using lifestyle-routine activity theory to explain single and recurrent victims of sexualization. Fisher and colleagues found that college women found themselves in places that were exclusively male, which increased their chances of sexual victimization (Fisher, Daigle and Cullen 2010). Prior studies also show that abusive partners are considered motivated offenders (Fisher *et al* 2006; Fisher *et al* 2010).

#### *Suitable Targets and Limited Guardianship*

Suitable targets are individuals who are attractive to motivated offenders. Fisher *et al* (2010) says that suitable targets are typically intoxicated, mainly by alcohol. Drug use may also be a contributing factor to becoming a suitable target. Alcohol and drug use

make people more vulnerable and can contribute to why offenders may chose them for a target instead of someone who is sober.

College students may also experience limited guardianship for the first time depending on what their circumstances are when attending college. Many students do not live at home while attending college, and some do not even live in on-campus housing where there may be more supervision from resident assistants, and other rules such as those relating to substance abuse are often enforced. Yet, there is some debate about how guardianship may reduce crime. Mukherjee and Carcah (1998) found a negative relationship between adults in a household and victimization. Other research shows that there is a strong link between capable guardianship and lower occurrences of victimization (Fisher, Daigle and Cullen 2010).

### *Exposure to Crime*

College students engage in lifestyle-routine activities that increase their exposure to crime. Fisher *et al* (2010) suggests that college women are more likely to become sexually victimized because of the “crime-enhancing environments” in which college students live. One example of exposure to crime includes going to parties where alcohol and drugs are present. Alcohol and drugs contribute to crime and victimization, which can also contribute to relationship abuse and sexual assault. Other examples of exposure to crime include walking alone at night (Rodgers and Roberts 1995), and spending time away from home (Lasley and Rosenbaum 1998). These atmospheres heighten the possibility of victimization for college students.

### *Issues Relating to Underreporting*

Prior research of false allegations of sexual assault and rape show that false reports do not occur as often as the public may believe it does (Lisak 2010). But a recent study of legal offices in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia show that false allegations occur only 2.1% to 10.9% of the time (Lisak 2010). Many departments were not correctly labeling false reports and mistaking them for cases that did not have enough evidence, where victims did not want to cooperate, or cases were not properly investigated (Lisak 2010). Lisak (2010) conducted a study at a Massachusetts university and showed that out of 136 reported sexual assaults that only eight of them were false reports (Lisak 2010). The study also showed that the majority of the “assaults were perpetrated by non-strangers, most involved a single perpetrator, the majority of victims were women, and many of them were intoxicated at the time of the assault” (Lisak 2010: 1329). It is important to show that false reports are not the norm and should not sway the public into thinking that victims are not truthful in their experience. The idea that false reports are more common than they really are contributes to the problem of underreporting by victims of rape and sexual assault.

Victims of sexual assault also face challenges such as support for the perpetrator. For example, a 14 year-old girl was raped and sodomized by a popular football player, who was later arrested (Ross 2009) only after there was a massive amount of support for the perpetrator and calling the victim a liar. Similar to this case is that of the Rolling Stone Magazine article, released in December 2014, of a girl who was gang raped at a fraternity house. The magazine later reported that they regret putting so much faith in the victim and that there were holes in her account of what happened to her during her

freshman year at the University of Virginia. These types of events discourage victims of sexual assault and relationship abuse to come forward with the abuse that has happened to them. This is particularly true in that after experiencing such a traumatic event, the details may be "fuzzy," or even inaccurate, which in turn can lead to doubting the victim's account of the event and pursuing it vigorously. This leaves many perpetrators not prosecuted for the crimes that they commit. This also sheds light into how communities, colleges, governments, and local authorities do not take relationship abuse and sexual assault as seriously as these crimes should be taken.

In summary, this study builds on this existing literature by using a web-based survey to establish to what degree relationship abuse and sexual assault are occurring on the Rhode Island College campus. Through the lens of lifestyle-routine activities theory the survey focuses on how college men and women perceive relationship abuse and assault. It also expands the literature on the use of social media: college students typically use internet sites like Facebook, Twitter, and other online sources for communication. This in turn expands their risk for exposure to harassment or unwanted contact. This study examines the issues of stalking/cyber-stalking and alcohol and drugs use, and what routine factors of everyday life contribute to relationship abuse and sexual assault.

## **Method**

After following all Institutional Review Board protocols, the data for this study come from an online survey administered to Justice Studies and Sociology majors and minors at Rhode Island College. The survey was first sent in an email from the Justice

Studies Program Director on September 12th, 2014. A follow-up reminder that also linked students to the online survey was sent at the end of the month.

The survey has four different sections (see Appendix D). The first section has five different scenarios that relate to relationship abuse and/or sexual assault: the participant is asked to identify if they believe the circumstance is relationship abuse and/or sexual assault. Participants are asked if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. This section helps to establish whether the participants understand the difference between sexual assault and relationship abuse. The second section of the survey asks general questions about relationship abuse and sexual assault. This section uses Likert scales from 1 to 5, from never (1) to very frequently (5). The third section asks about more recent incidents of sexual assault and relationship abuse. This section also uses the same Likert scale from 1 to 5. The final section asks for basic demographic information, including age cohort, residence, employment status, alcohol consumption, and if they attended parties on or off campus. The survey is designed to test the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Men and women currently enrolled at Rhode Island College experience relationship abuse.

H<sub>2</sub>: Men and women may perceive relationship abuse differently.

H<sub>3</sub>: Incidents of sexual assault or attempted sexual/physical assault occur both on and off campus.

H<sub>4</sub>: Incidents of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault are not reported or are under-reported to College officials.

H<sub>5</sub>: Both men and women experience cyber-stalking/cyber-harassment.

The sample size is  $n = 72$  that came from a targeted sample of approximately 500 students who were sent an anonymous web-based survey link via their RIC email account. Based on the emails sent, the survey had a 16% return rate. Important to note, this study uses a sample of convenience and is not generalizable to the larger Rhode Island College community or other students from other colleges. Although I expected to receive about 100 responses from the Justice Studies and Sociology majors and minors, this goal was not met. An email explaining what the survey was and the link to participate was emailed to Justice Studies and Sociology majors and minors on two different dates (Appendix B, C). Announcements were also made in Sociology classes to ask students to participate. Another email was also sent to Justice Studies and Sociology faculty and adjunct faculty asking them to remind their students to participate as well. A few professors reached out, made announcements, and sent emails to their students asking for more participation. The Justice Studies Program Director sent out one more announcement at the end of the month of September (Appendix C), and the survey site was closed on October 1, 2014 at 10:00 PM.

The data from the survey were then downloaded into an Excel file and then imported into the statistical software SPSS and Stata. It should be noted that no computer IP addresses or other identifying characteristics from the survey participants were known to the researcher. Although this method provided anonymity, it is not known if someone took the survey more than once or even if the participants were from the targeted sample population.

All of the variables were nominal, ordinal, or binary. Variables were transformed and indexes were made for portions of the survey in order to test the efficacy of lifestyle



routine activity theory, sexual assault and relationship abuse. Indexes were made for the intimidation, coercive, communication, and social media sections of the survey. Another index was made for a composite score of lifestyle-routine activities. The lifestyle-routine activities index comprises questions pertaining to protective factors such as living at home, working full time, and owning one's own car (see Appendix D).

The intimidation index comprises of 9 questions. The questions include: called you a name or criticized you, said something to scare you, pressured you to have sex with you in a way that you didn't want or like, said someone else would be a better partner, told you that no one would ever want you, told you that you weren't good enough, told you that you were ugly, belittled you in front of your friends, and called you a bitch or asshole (Appendix D). This Index was not significant by gender, age cohort, or routine activity index.

The communication index includes four questions from the survey. The questions comprise of: got angry with you because you had been with someone or went somewhere without telling them, became so angry they were unable or unwilling to talk, acted cold or distant, and refused to have any discussion of a problem (Appendix D). This index was also not a significant predictor of relationship abuse or sexual assault.

The coercive index, which did have significant results, was comprised of six different questions. Those questions include: if a partner has tried to keep you from doing something with your friend(s), made you do something humiliating or degrading, stopped you from going to school, harassed you at work, didn't want you to socialize with the same sex as you, and a question relating to stalking (Appendix D). Because this index was

skewed the professor transformed the variable with a log 10 transformation in order to use ordinary least squares analyses.

The final index comprises questions based on social media use within the past year. Four questions make up the index. The questions include: checked your Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and/or other social media accounts, contacted you or attempted to contact you through social media after you asked/told them to stop, made unwanted sexual advance toward you through social media, and spoke to you in a violent manner or threatened to physically harm you through social media. This index did have some substantive results, which are discussed below.

## Results

Statistical results show that more females (76.4%) took the survey than did males (22.2%). This leaves little room to determine if there were significant gender differences because some cells had fewer than 5 responses. Frequencies also show that the sample is mainly heterosexual (92.8%) with only 4.3% identifying as homosexual and 2.8% as another sexuality. The majority of those students sampled report that they are in a relationship, have an undergraduate full-time student status, and identified their family wealth as “middle class” (Table 1). Most of the respondents are also over the age of 21 (68.1%), live at home with their parents (50.7%), and work part-time (55.6%). Finally, most of the sample also has their own car for transportation (86.1%).

**Table 1: Crosstabulation of Demographic Questions (No significance)**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Transgender</i>
<i>Relationship Status</i>			
In a relationship	16 (22.2%)	55 (76.4%)	1 (1.4%)
	9 (56.35)	31 (56.4%)	1 (100.0%)

Not in a relationship	6 (37.5%)	19 (34.5%)	--
Currently cohabitating with Partner	1 (6.3%)	3 (5.5%)	--
<b><i>Student Status</i></b>			
Undergraduate Part-time	2 (12.5%)	4 (7.3%)	--
Undergraduate Full-time	14 (87.5%)	51 (92.7%)	1 (100.0%)
<b><i>Family Wealth</i></b>			
Poor	1 (6.3%)	12 (22.6%)	--
Middle Class	15 (93.8%)	38 (71.7%)	1 (100.0%)
Wealthy	--	3 (5.7%)	--

H<sub>1</sub> tests if men and women enrolled at the College experience relationship abuse. Tests on this hypothesis show that both men and women may experience relationship abuse, although the data in many cases are not statistically conclusive for one gender over the other. Both males and females report that they have been intimidated or coerced by partners through social media. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Social Media Questions (No Significance)**

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Very Frequently</i>
<b>Checked your Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and/or other social media accounts</b>	41 (56.9%)	10 (13.9%)	10 (13.9%)	4 (5.6%)	7 (9.7%)
<b>Contacted you or attempted to contact you through social media after you asked/told them to stop</b>	55 (77.5%)	6 (8.3%)	6 (8.3%)	1 (1.4%)	3 (4.2%)
<b>Made unwanted sexual advance toward you through social media</b>	63 (87.5%)	3 (4.2%)	2 (2.8%)	2 (2.8%)	2 (2.8%)
<b>Spoke to you in a violent manner or threatened to physically harm you through social media</b>	69 (95.8%)	1 (1.4%)	--	--	2 (2.8%)

--	--

The coercive index consists of six questions (Appendix D). The index shows women's scores range from 6 - 20, with a mean of 8.27 and a standard deviation of 3.33 (n=52). Men have a range of 6 - 30 with a mean of 9.31 and a standard deviation of 5.93 (n=16). Although there was no statistical difference by gender, qualitatively men report slightly more cyber coercive tactics than do the women. Perhaps with a larger sample, the statistical evidence would become more apparent. Answers on the coercive index range from 6 to 30 with a mean of 8.27 and a standard deviation of 4.04.

In fact, the coercive index had more predictive results than any other: coercive tactics were substantially more likely caused by students who reported incidents of stalking ( $b = .787, p < .10$ ) and when the stalking happened on campus ( $b=2.01, p < .10$ ). In a bivariate regression, coercive tactics were also more likely used against a victim when he or she did not have access to their own transportation ( $b = -1.49, p < .10$ ). These two variables, lack of transportation and being on campus, do relate to lifestyle-routine activity theory in which limited guardianship is apparent.

Also interesting was that threats to keep the individual from friends, make the person do something humiliating, or the individual felt harassed at work were more likely to happen through social media ( $b=.607, p < .05$ ). Using social media sources alone accounted for 11% of the variance in the coercive tactics used against the victim (adj.  $r$ -square = .109,  $p < .01$ ). Protective factors associated with lifestyle-routine activity were

not significant predictors of this type of cyber-harassment, which indicates a weakness in the theory.

Statistical results were analyzed for other indexes in the survey but were not significant. Although, gender did appear to be a factor with some limited results for the routine activity index. Men were less likely to be “suitable targets” because they either worked full or part time, lived at home with their parents, and had their own transportation. A higher score on the routine activity index means that the individual protective factors reduce the risk of relationship abuse and sexual assault. Women's scores range from 1 to 4, with a mean of 2.9 and a standard deviation of .84. Men's scores range from 2 to 9, with a mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 2.2. The chi-square test of independent means show that men have access to greater resources or protective factors based on this index, as they are living at home or can drive their own car when compared to the women in the sample ( $X=10.9$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The communication index comprises four questions from the survey and higher scores indicate a greater amount of unwelcome/abusive communication (Appendix D). There were some minor differences here, although the differences were not statistically significant. Men's answers range from a score of 11 to a maximum score of 55. The mean is 22.4 with a standard deviation of 12.8. The women experience somewhat less disparaging communication than do the men, with a range from 11 to 48, a mean of 19.5 and a standard deviation of 10.2. Because this sample was overwhelming heterosexual, the conclusion is that women are the motivated offenders who use disparaging language toward the men.

The social media index identifies whether various types of online sites have ever been used to threaten or intimidate. This scale consists of four questions. Responses range from 7 to 35, higher score indicate greater abuse. Once again, men report a somewhat higher average than the women, with a mean of 12.1 and a standard deviation of 7.6. Women's scores average 10.6, with a standard deviation of 5.8.

The intimidation index comprises nine questions (Appendix D). The index has a range from 9 to 45, a mean of 14 and a standard deviation of 7.3 and 9.1 respectively. Both males and females indicate that there were no differences in the way college-age men and women experience intimidation. Findings from the intimidation index do show that females are more likely to feel intimidated when there is alcohol present (significant at  $p < .05$ ), so this finding indicates a more fluid dynamic in which women can be both the perpetrators of disparaging communication and also suitable targets in the presence of alcohol. In general, both males and females report that they feel more intimidated when they go to parties, bars, or clubs where alcohol is served. This finding does support lifestyle-routine activity theory because people who have riskier lifestyles are more likely to be victimized. Without guardianship, this leaves students as suitable targets for victimization. Also going to parties, bars and clubs where alcohol is served may increase the students' exposure to crime and put them in proximity to motivated offenders, which also increases their victimization. From a theoretical perspective, the findings suggest that both women and men can be suitable targets and motivated offenders. Women are more likely to feel threatened in physical spaces, such as at a bar or party where alcohol is present, and men are more likely to feel threatened on line.

Alcohol consumption is the only variable that was significantly correlated to gender ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .058$ ), indicating that males routinely drank more than did females. Participants who do report drinking while at parties, bars and clubs (33%) only had one drink per hour (29.2%) or two drinks per hour (29.2%). Three male participants report drinking more than three drinks per hour and another three reported having more than four drinks in one hour.

**Table 3: Parties and Bars Where Drugs are Present Crosstabs by Gender (No significance)**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<b>Do you attend parties where alcohol is served?</b>		
Yes	11 (68.8%)	35 (63.6%)
No	5 (31.3%)	20 (36.4%)
<b>Do you go to bars and/or clubs where alcohol is served?</b>		
Yes	10 (62.5%)	35 (63.6%)
No	6 (37.5%)	20 (36.4%)
<b>Do you attend parties where recreational drugs (i.e. marijuana) are present?</b>		
Yes	9 (56.3%)	26 (48.1%)
No	7 (43.8%)	28 (51.9%)

H<sub>2</sub> asks if men and women perceive relationship abuse differently. In this study, men and women do not perceive relationship abuse or sexual assault differently. In every scenario, both men and women answered similarly. Each scenario also is answered with the majority of people choosing the correct answer. The participants are able to identify if the scenario was either relationship abuse or sexual assault. Although speculative, the lack of difference may indicate that students had exposure to these issues through justice studies and sociology classes and are more aware and educated on these topics (Table 4).

**Table 4: Crosstabs by Gender for Relationship Abuse/Sexual Assault Scenarios (No Significance)**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<b><i>Fran and Larry</i></b>		
Strongly Agree	13 (81.3%)	47 (87.0%)
Agree	2 (12.5%)	7 (13.0%)
Disagree	--	--
Strongly Disagree	1 (6.3%)	--
<b><i>Angela and Joe</i></b>		
Strongly Agree	10 (62.5%)	33 (61.1%)
Agree	3 (18.8%)	18 (33.3%)
Disagree	2 (12.5%)	3 (5.6%)
Strongly Disagree	1 (6.3%)	--
<b><i>Philip and Irene</i></b>		
Strongly Agree	6 (37.5%)	30 (55.6%)
Agree	8 (50.0%)	18 (33.3%)
Disagree	1 (6.3%)	5 (9.3%)
Strongly Disagree	1 (6.3%)	1 (1.9%)
<b><i>Tim and Jeff</i></b>		
Strongly Agree	1 (6.3%)	7 (13.0%)
Agree	3 (18.8%)	14 (25.9%)
Disagree	9 (56.3%)	30 (55.6%)
Strongly Disagree	3 (18.8%)	3 (5.6%)
<b><i>Peter and Lindsay</i></b>		
Strongly Agree	--	--
Agree	1 (6.3%)	2 (3.7%)
Disagree	6 (37.5%)	24 (44.4%)
Strongly Disagree	9 (56.3%)	28 (51.9%)

H<sub>3</sub> focuses on incidents of sexual assault or attempted sexual/physical assault and whether they occur on or off campus. Five participants, males (2) and females (3), reported that “sometimes” they had physical force happen to them. They were living in different places, with parents, off-campus, and on-campus as well as in other places. Due to the limited number of incidents, this relationship was not statistically significant, and there is no way to determine if lifestyle-routine activity theory can be validated with this small number of incidents.

There are significant results in the location of where stalking (on campus or off campus) and victimization took place, despite its limited occurrence. The variable



*KeepFrom*, which measures if a partner “tried to keep you from doing something with your friend(s),” was significantly correlated to the location of stalking ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ). Leaving the campus community is associated with taking greater risk, and this does support lifestyle-routine activities theory. Another variable suggests similar support for lifestyle-routine activities theory and that is spending time outside the house or campus community. The variable, *HarassWork*, which measures if a partner has “harassed you while at work,” is also significantly correlated to stalking location ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ).

H<sub>4</sub> tests whether sexual assault is reported or under-reported to college officials and/or the police. Participants are asked if a sexual assault has happened to them, had they reported it to Rhode Island College officials or to the police. Most participants answered that they did not have an incident to report to the College (87.3%) and many also said they did not report to police, campus security or another law enforcement agency (66.1%). This discrepancy could reflect under-reporting, but there is also the chance that participants did answer no and not have read the question correctly. It is also possible that they think RIC security is ineffective or non-welcoming given that all staff are retired, male police officers with prior careers in law enforcement. There are eight students (12.7%) who did report to the College and seven students (11.3%) who did report to the police. Fourteen participants (22.6%) state that they reported a sexual assault to some other entity rather than the college or the police. These self reports contrast with Rhode Island College’s official numbers from the previous year in which the College claimed only two assaults were reported.

**Table 5: Crosstabs by Gender and Reporting Sexual Assault (No Significance)**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<b>Have you reported it to Rhode Island College?</b>		
Yes	1 (7.7%)	6 (12.2%)
No	12 (92.3%)	43 (87.8%)
<b>Have you reported it to State, City, or Town Police?</b>		
Yes	--	6 (12.2%)
No	10 (83.3%)	31 (63.3%)
Other	2 (16.7%)	12 (24.5%)

Finally, H<sub>5</sub> proposes to establish whether both men and women experience cyber-stalking/cyber-harassment. Social media variables were significantly associated with the coercive index ( $r = .51$   $p < .01$ ). In fact, in a bivariate regression, the use of social media predicts the use of coercive tactics ( $b = .202$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding indicates that students report feeling more victimized indirectly through social media rather than when they are in physical places, such as at a bar or party, and the negative interactions are face to face. Results show that students who go to parties, bars, and clubs where alcohol is served are also more likely to receive harassment from social media sources and receive unwanted texts on their cell phones. Also predictive were living These reports asked students to identify whether the harassment was something that had happened to them in the past or within the last year. Frequency tables and crosstabs show that the majority of students who participated in this study went to parties where alcohol is served (63.9%) as well as bars/clubs where alcohol is served (62.5%) (See Table 3).

Other results from two sample t-tests show that females and males are substantively different in their responses of social media and technology abuse within the last year if a confidence interval of 90% is used ( $t = -1.74$ ,  $df = 68$ ,  $p < .10$ ). In the test, male respondents have a higher incident of experiencing on line harassment and abuse

than did the female respondents. In another two sample t-test, the results show that the bulk of the harassment that participants experience is through social media. Since 93% of survey respondents identify as heterosexual, it appears that women are harassing men through social media, such as Twitter and Facebook ( $t = -2.35$ ,  $df = 69$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## **Discussion**

These analyses suggest that lifestyle –routine activity theory may point to a gendered pathway for suitable targets and motivated offenders. The data suggest that women are more inclined to verbally harass men through social media venues, and social media venues provide a vehicle for coercive tactics. Perhaps because the harassing communication is indirect and on line, female students more easily become the “motivated offenders.” Conversely, women also become the “suitable targets” when they are at parties where alcohol is served. What is not clear from these analyses is the current status of relationship abuse and sexual assault in this small sample. It may or may not have occurred on this college campus as many analyses were inconclusive. The data do not reveal a convincing pattern, but they do suggest that unwanted harassment does occur, and stalking and location of the stalking while on campus can also lead to risky, coercive incidents. The sample size and the amount of responses to the survey were not large enough for many more significant conclusions.

The results also show traditional support for lifestyle-routine activity theory in that students, both male and female, who go to parties, bars and clubs where alcohol is served are more likely to have threatening, unwanted tactics used against them. It was also found that it did not matter if the students were consuming alcohol, that just being in

a place where alcohol was present was enough to make many of them feel at risk. In this regard, it is clear that students who completed the survey were not perpetrators of abuse but were more likely to be victims. The exception to this pattern is when heterosexual male respondents said they were more likely to be harassed through social media sources.

Findings show that coercive tactics are more likely to occur via social media outlets, so this demonstrates that students were more likely to be victimized through technology than they were in a physical place. This finding, that social media is used to harass, is not supported by lifestyle- routine activities theory that says victimization occurs in physical, public places. Technology and the Internet have made it possible for victimization to occur in a different form, and this has been understudied in the literature to date. More research needs to be done to determine what theories would best fit this type of deviant and troubling behavior.

Other potential theories to investigate relationship abuse and sexual assault through social media could be achieved through feminist theories. Feminist theories examine how a patriarchal society contributes to the sexual violence that women and men experience. Armstrong and Hamilton (2006) suggest that both women and men need to be educated about the coercive tactics used in sexual violence. Further research into educational programs for students about coercive tactics could also reduce the amount of harassment that men are receiving from women through social media.

Although there are a plethora of studies on college-age sexual assaults, there is less known about relationship abuse. This study began an important inquiry into establishing some patterns of relationship abuse, particularly through the use of social media. This finding does not fit easily with lifestyle-routine activities theory, so other

theories need to be tested to better establish and predict this type of unwelcome, harassing behavior.

## **Limitations**

Many of the hypotheses could not be tested due to the limited sample size, particularly those requiring male responses. There are limited significant findings as a result. The group of students sampled were Justice Studies and Sociology students, and this educated group may have more knowledge about the topics that were asked in the survey, which in turn could have affected the way questions were answered. A better strategy for sampling could have been used by sending a campus-wide invitation to participate in the study. If a stratified quota sample had been used to gather more male participants, hypotheses could have been tested more effectively.

For example, the survey was originally going to be distributed to the entire student body enrolled at Rhode Island College, but at the beginning of the semester the Dean of Students decided that he would not distribute the link through the Office of Student Life. Without the email being distributed through that office there was no way to reach a broader, more representative sample as originally planned. Another limitation to the study was that because of the convenience sample used the results cannot be generalizable.

The study had other limitations. The first limitation was that there were numerous delays before receiving Institutional Review Board approval. The survey was sent to the IRB in March of 2014 and was not approved until September of 2014. This left little time

for the survey to be left open for participants to respond. In fact, the survey was only open for two weeks.

Another limitation includes the web-based distribution that kept respondents anonymous. The link to the survey was sent twice, so it is not known if a participant took the survey more than once or what their motivations might have been to take the survey in the first place. Neither is there a guarantee that people enrolled at Rhode Island College also took the survey. Another limitation is that some students who received the email to participate were not 18 years of age and were deemed ineligible by the inclusion standards established in the Institutional Review Board protocols. One student, who was under 18, emailed to say they would like to participate, but could not because of their age.

## **Conclusion**

This research does provide some supportive results based on the larger literature of sexual assault and relationship abuse. The use of social media and other sources of technology exacerbate coercive tactics and unwanted communication that is associated with relationship abuse and sexual assault but not in a physical location as lifestyle-routine activities theory predicts. What is unique about this research is that men were more likely to experience more unwanted harassment through social media contact than did female respondents - here the men identify as victims. It is clear that locations where alcohol is present continues to be a predictor of unwanted sexual contact and/or relationship abuse, primarily for women, and that finding is replicated throughout the literature. Telling from these self-reports is that the prevalence of unwanted abuses is

greater than what Rhode Island College admits is happening in their official annual report. This underreporting may send a message to students that Rhode Island College is not doing enough to support victims and to curb this trend that is a national epidemic.

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## Appendix A

Greetings,

The proposal for the project referenced below has been APPROVED by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Project title: Perceptions and Occurrences of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

Approval #: 1415-1074

Type of review: Full Board Review

Proposal type: Original

Principle Investigator: Harrison, Jill

Fees received: 1. No fees -- RIC supervised or sponsored

Approval date: 9/11/2014

Expiration date: 9/10/2015

A request to renew this protocol must be received by 8/14/2015.

Click here to access the

protocol: <https://ric.topazti.net/RIC/Default.aspx?linkParms=NPqkQNfZcnUoPNiKYzEDQ%3d%3d>

Your responsibilities as the Principal Investigator on this project are as follows:

1. You may implement only those materials and methods approved by the IRB. Changes to the protocol topic or methods, including the elimination of previously-approved methods, require prior approval.
2. If you are using signed consent materials, a PDF of the form(s) with the approval stamp will be uploaded to your protocol. You must use this copy with participants.
3. Unanticipated problems or adverse events must be reported within three (3) days of your knowledge of the event.
4. If you wish to continue the project beyond the expiration date, you must complete and submit a progress/final report within 30-days prior to the expiration date. If approval to continue the project is not finalized by the expiration date, you must discontinue all work pertaining to this protocol and wait until approval is given before resuming data collection.
5. You must keep all research data and consent documents within your possession in a secured location for at least three (3) years after the completion of the study, including publications or presentations of any reports.

Best Regards,

Christine A. Marco, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Chair, IRB  
Rhode Island College  
IRB@ric.edu

## Appendix B

Dear Students,

You are receiving this invitation to participate in a survey on sexual assault (**"Perceptions and Occurrences of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault"**), as part of a Justice Studies honors project. It is being sent to all Justice Studies and Sociology Majors and Minors, approximately 500 of you. Please consider helping a fellow student complete her project! The survey is linked below, and should you wish to participate, you need to be at least 18 years old. Your answers will remain confidential and anonymous. No names or answers you give can ever be linked back to you. Please complete the survey only once. It will take about 20 minutes to complete, and we are grateful for your support.

Please feel free to contact me or Dr. Ciambrone, Chair, should you have any questions or concerns.

Survey Link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1auF2aVEhyQ8qwbOCPvHX3-edIltAZ\\_bore30rAwfP38/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1auF2aVEhyQ8qwbOCPvHX3-edIltAZ_bore30rAwfP38/viewform)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jill

Jill Harrison, Ph.D.  
Interim Director Justice Studies Program  
Associate Professor  
Department of Sociology  
Rhode Island College  
452 Craig Lee Hall  
600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908  
[jharrison@ric.edu](mailto:jharrison@ric.edu)  
Office: 401 456-8731  
Fax: 401 456-8665

## Appendix C

Dear Students,

Last Chance! Our data collection window is now closing. If you have not already done so, please consider taking this survey on sexual assault ("**Perceptions and Occurrences of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault**"), as part of a Justice Studies honors project. It was originally sent to all Justice Studies and Sociology Majors and Minors, approximately 500 of you, and we are still in need of student participation.

Please consider helping a fellow student complete her project! The survey is linked below, and should you wish to participate, you need to be at least 18 years old. Your answers will remain confidential and anonymous. This research has been vetted by a full Institutional Review Board and meets all federal guidelines. No names or answers you give can ever be linked back to you. Please complete the survey only once. It will take about 20 minutes to complete, and we are grateful for your support.

Please feel free to contact me or Dr. Ciambrone, Chair, should you have any questions or concerns.

Survey Link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1auF2aVEhyQ8qwbOCPvHX3-edIltAZ\\_bore30rAwfP38/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1auF2aVEhyQ8qwbOCPvHX3-edIltAZ_bore30rAwfP38/viewform)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jill

Jill Harrison, Ph.D.

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## Appendix D

# “Perceptions and Occurrences of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault”

\* Required

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### CONSENT DOCUMENT

#### Rhode Island College

You are being asked to participate in a research study about relationship abuse and/or sexual assault that may occur among college students. The study will help find what students' perceptions of relationship abuse and sexual assault are and if it occurs among students who attend college. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently enrolled in coursework at Rhode Island College, as an undergraduate, graduate or non-matriculated student in the Justice/Sociology Program. Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before deciding whether to be in the study.

Jessica Parenteau, an undergraduate student, and Dr. Jill Harrison, a professor at Rhode Island College, are conducting this study.

#### Background Information

The purpose of this research is to find out if relationship abuse and/or sexual assault occur within the Rhode Island College Community. The study will help find what students believe to be relationship abuse and sexual assault. Studies indicate that many students do not know what qualifies as relationship abuse and sexual assault (Miller, 2011, Fisher, 2000) and this may lead to under reporting of issues that may actually be occurring in this campus community.

#### Procedures

If you choose to be a participant in this research, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Complete a survey that asks questions about relationship abuse, sexual assault, and other experiences such as alcohol and drug use.
- Some questions ask about illegal activity, i.e. underage alcohol use and drug use.
- Some questions ask about specific acts of abuse and assault the may have been experienced.
- This will take about 20 minutes.
- You will need a web-browser that is compatible with Google Forms.
- You must be 18 years of age or older to participate

#### Risks of Being in the Study

There are risks in participating in this survey. The survey could trigger responses in people who have experienced relationship abuse and/or sexual assault. The survey could make participants realize that they have experienced an act(s) of relationship abuse and/or sexual assault that they did not think were either of these things before taking the survey. Contact numbers and hotlines will be provided in this consent form and at the end of the survey to help people cope with any emotional distress. This survey also asks about illegal activity, including underage drinking and drug use. All surveys will be anonymous. The IP addresses and email addresses will not be stored in order to protect your anonymity. You are also allowed to not answer questions that you don't want to. You may stop taking the survey at any time you wish.

#### Information About Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

If you would like to learn more about relationship abuse and/or sexual assault please visit one of the websites below. If you experience triggering effects from the survey please call one of the hotlines listed below (both local and national hotlines are provided):

#### **RIC Counseling Center**

Website: <https://www.ric.edu/counselingctr/>

Phone Number: 1-401-456-8094

Location: Craig Lee 130

The RIC Counseling Center helps with any difficulties of stress or other psychological problems that students may experience while attending Rhode Island College.

#### **Day One Rhode Island**

Website: <http://www.dayoneri.org/>

Hotline: 1-800-494-8100

Day One provides services to people who are victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, as well as other crimes. Day One is also an advocacy center for people who suffer from sexual assault, and domestic violence. They hope to help reduce that amount of these crimes in Rhode Island.

#### **Sojourner House**

Website: <http://www.sojournerri.org>

Hotline: 1-401-765-3232

Sojourner House is an advocacy center for people suffering from domestic violence. They offer a safe place where victims can go. They also do help people of the LGBT community.

#### **RAINN: Rape, Abuse, and Incest Nationwide Network**

Website: <http://www.rainn.org>

National Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE

RAINN is one of the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organizations. They help people who are victims from all types of sexual violence.



**Sexual Assault on Campuses: What Colleges and Universities are doing about It**

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/205521.pdf>

**Rhode Island College Annual Security Report: Sex Offenses and Procedures Following a Sex Offense**<https://www.ric.edu/campussecurityreport/#12>

Please print this Consent Document. This will allow you to have access to the websites and hotlines provided above while taking the survey.

**Benefits to You**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. The results of the survey will be made public through the Dean of Students Office at Rhode Island College. The results of the study will also be shared directly with the participant, at the request of the participant.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation is completely voluntary. Rhode Island College does not require it. You can choose not to participate in this research and it will have no effect on your grades, or anything pertaining to your school life. Also, you can change your mind about participating at any time with no negative consequences.

**Confidentiality**

The records of this research will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a secured file, and access will be limited to the researcher. If there are problems with the study, the research records may be viewed by Rhode Island College review board responsible for protecting human participants and other government agencies that protect human participants in research. All data will be kept for a minimum of three years, after which it will be destroyed.

**Contacts and Questions**

The researcher conducting this study is Jessica Parenteau. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, you may contact her at [jparenteau\\_2331@email.ric.edu](mailto:jparenteau_2331@email.ric.edu), or you can contact Dr. Jill Harrison at [jharrison@ric.edu](mailto:jharrison@ric.edu).

If you think you were treated unfairly or would like to talk to someone other than the researcher about your rights or safety as a research participant, please contact Dr. Christine Marco, Chair of the Rhode Island College Institutional Review Board at [IRB@ric.edu](mailto:IRB@ric.edu), or by phone at 401-456-8598, or by writing to Dr.

Christine Marco, Chair IRB; c/o Department of Psychology, Horace Mann Hall 311; Rhode Island College; 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue; Providence, RI 02908. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

#### Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the information above, and I agree to participate in the study “Perceptions and Occurrence of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault at Rhode Island College.” I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time with no negative consequences. I have received answers to the questions I asked, or I will contact the researcher with any future questions that arise. I am at least 18 years of age.

#### Consent Document \*

Once you have read the Consent Document please pick one of the following. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participating in this survey.

- ☐ Yes, I consent
- ☐ No, I do not consent

## Perceptions of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

Relationship abuse describes psychological (involves trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics and includes [but is not limited to] humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family) sexual (any sexual act that is unwanted by the victim [this includes pressure to do any type of sexual act]) and physical (intentional use of force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm and includes [but not limited to] behaviors such as pushing, shoving, slapping use of weapons) harm by a current or former partner (Taken from UNH Survey about relationship abuse and sexual assault).

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, fondling, and attempted rape (Office on Violence Against Women).

## What do you think? Sexual Assault and Relationship Abuse Scenarios

Please read the following scenarios and choose the answer that fits best with what you think. All scenarios come from: “Defining Sexual Assault” by RenaeFraniuk, published in College Teaching, Vol 55, No. 3.

**Fran and Larry have gone on a couple of dates and get along very well. They have kissed a bit after each date but have not gone any further. One night, Larry invites Fran into his apartment. They begin kissing and it starts to go further. Their clothing off, Fran tells Larry that she does not want to have sex. He ignores this, gets on top of her, and has sex with her. Fran continually asks him to stop but he does not.**

I believe this is an example of a sexual assault.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**Angela and Joe have been dating for 4 months. They have had sex on many occasions. One night when Angela and Joe are having sex, Angela changes her mind and does not want to continue. She tells Joe several times that she wants to stop, but he continues.**

I believe that this is an example of sexual assault.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**Philip and Irene have been dating for two years. They have been physically intimate but have not had sex. They have fought several times over Irene's reluctance to have sex. One night, while having a heated argument about this topic, Philip punches the wall. Irene is scared of what Philip might do if she does not agree to have sex with him. So she agrees to have sex with him.**

I believe that this is an example of relationship abuse.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**Tim and Jeff are studying for their chemistry final on Jeff's bed. They are friends and seem to be attracted to each other. Tim kisses Jeff and he kisses him back. Tim asks Jeff if he wants to have sex, and Jeff responds, "I don't know." Tim starts arousing Jeff.**

I believe that this is an example of relationship abuse.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**Peter and Lindsay meet for the first time when with mutual friends at a bar. Neither of them has had any alcohol to drink. Lindsay lives within walking distance of the bar and invites Peter to come back to her house. They have sex. The next morning they both feel very awkward and regret that they had sex.**

I believe that this is an example of relationship abuse.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

## Perceptions of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

Relationship abuse describes psychological (involves trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics and includes [but is not limited to] humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family) sexual (any sexual act that is unwanted by the victim [this includes pressure to do any type of sexual act]) and physical (intentional use of force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm and includes [but not limited to] behaviors such as pushing, shoving, slapping use of weapons) harm by a current or former partner (Taken from UNH Survey about relationship abuse and sexual assault).

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, fondling, and attempted rape (Office on Violence Against Women).

## Intimidation

Please answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = frequently, and 5 = very frequently).

Many questions coming from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV\\_Compendium.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV_Compendium.pdf) Reynolds, Bradford W., Billy Henson, Bonnie S. Fisher. 2012. "Stalking in the Twilight Zone: Extent of Cyberstalking Victimization and Offending Among College Students." Deviant Behavior 33: 1-25.

The Rhode Island College Community is individuals who are enrolled in coursework at Rhode Island College, as well as past undergraduate and graduate students of Rhode Island College.

While being a part of the Rhode Island College Community, has a partner ever:

**Called you a name or criticized you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Said something to scare you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Pressured you to have sex in a way that you didn't like or want**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Said someone else would be a better partner (better spouse, better girlfriend, or better boyfriend)**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Told you that no one would ever want you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Told you that you weren't good enough**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Told you that you were ugly**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Belittled you in front of friends, or in public**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Called you a bitch or asshole**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

## Coercive Tactics

Please answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = frequently, and 5 = very frequently).

Many questions coming from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV\\_Compendium.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV_Compendium.pdf) Reynolds, Bradford W., Billy Henson, Bonnie S. Fisher. 2012. "Stalking in the Twilight Zone: Extent of Cyberstalking Victimization and Offending Among College Students." *Deviant Behavior* 33: 1-25. Fisher, Bonnie S., Francis T. Cullen, Michael G. Turner. 2002. "Being Pursued: Stalking Victimization in a National Study of College Women." *Criminology & Public Policy* 1(2):257-308.

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While being a part of the Rhode Island College Community, how often has a partner:

**Tried to keep you from doing something with your friend(s)**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Made you do something humiliating or degrading**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Stopped you from going to school**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Harassed you at work**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Didn't want you to socialize with friends of the same sex as you**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Made unwanted sexual advances toward you through social media**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Repeatedly followed you, watched you, phoned, text messaged, contacted you through social media, or communicated with you in others in a way that seemed obsessive and made you afraid or concerned for your safety**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**If any of the acts in the previous question occurred, where did they occur?**

- ☐ On-campus
- ☐ Off-campus

## Communication

Please answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = frequently, and 5 = very frequently).

Many questions coming from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV\\_Compendium.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV_Compendium.pdf) Reynolds, Bradford W., Billy Henson, Bonnie S. Fisher. 2012. "Stalking in the Twilight Zone: Extent of Cyberstalking Victimization and Offending Among College Students." Deviant Behavior 33: 1-25.

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While being a part of the Rhode Island College Community, has a partner ever:

**Got angry with you because you had been with someone or went somewhere without telling them**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Became so angry they were unable or unwilling to talk**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Acted cold or distant when angry**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Refused to have any discussion of a problem**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very frequently

**Harassed you over the phone**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Harassed you over text messaging**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Harassed you using a type of social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc.)**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Threatened you for your passwords to social media**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Spoke to you in a violent manner or threatened to physically harm you through social media**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Looked through your emails and/or other private computer files**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently



**Looked through your cell phone (i.e. text messages, apps, pictures, etc.)**

1      2      3      4      5

---

Never    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    Very Frequently

---

## Perceptions of Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault

Relationship abuse describes psychological (involves trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics and includes [but is not limited to] humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family) sexual (any sexual act that is unwanted by the victim [this includes pressure to do any type of sexual act]) and physical (intentional use of force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm and includes [but not limited to] behaviors such as pushing, shoving, slapping use of weapons) harm by a current or former partner (Taken from UNH Survey about relationship abuse and sexual assault).

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, fondling, and attempted rape (Office on Violence Against Women).

## Thinking back over this past year... how healthy have your relationship(s) been?

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = frequently, and 5 = very frequently).

Many questions coming from: [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV\\_Compendium.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/IPV_Compendium.pdf) Reynolds, Bradford W., Billy Henson, Bonnie S. Fisher. 2012. "Stalking in the Twilight Zone: Extent of Cyberstalking Victimization and Offending Among College Students." Deviant Behavior 33: 1-25.

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Within the last year, while being a part of the Rhode Island College Community, has a partner or another person:

**Checked your Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and/or other social media accounts**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Contacted you or attempted to contact you through social media after you asked/told them to stop**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Made unwanted sexual advance toward you through social media**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Spoke to you in a violent manner or threatened to physically harm you through social media**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Lied to you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Acted like a bully towards you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Demands your obedience**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Became angry enough to frighten you**

1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

**Forced you into sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by their continual arguments and pressure**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Forced you into sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by their continual arguments and pressure**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Used force to make you have oral sex**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Demands sex whether you want it or not**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Physically forced you to have sex**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Physically attacked the sexual parts of your body**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Used force to make you have anal sex**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

**Insisted that you have sex when you didn't want to (but did not use physical force)**

1 2 3 4 5

---

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Frequently

---

## Tell Us About Yourself

Please answer the following general questions. (You will never be contacted or identified. All information is confidential and your anonymity maintained.)

**Gender**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans
- ☐ Other:

**Sexual Orientation**

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Other:

**Relationship Status**

- ☐ In a relationship
- ☐ Not in a relationship
- ☐ Currently cohabitating with partner
- ☐ Other:

**Age**

- ☐ Under 21
- ☐ 21 and over

**Where are you currently living?**

- ☐ On-campus
- ☐ Off-campus housing
- ☐ At home with parents
- ☐ Other:

**Student Status**

- ☐ Undergraduate Part-time
- ☐ Undergraduate Full-time
- ☐ Graduate Part-time
- ☐ Graduate Full-time
- ☐ Alumni

**Work Status**

- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Unemployed

**How would you describe your family growing up?**

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Middle Class
- ☐ Wealthy

**Transportation**

- ☐ I have my own car
- ☐ I take the bus
- ☐ I rely on others for rides
- ☐ Other:

**Do you attend parties where alcohol is served?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Do you go to bars and/or clubs where alcohol is served?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**How many alcoholic drinks do you consume when you are at a party or bar/cub?**

- ☐ Zero drinks
- ☐ One drink per hour
- ☐ Two drinks per hour
- ☐ Three drinks per hour
- ☐ Four or more drinks per hour

**Do you attend parties where recreational drugs (i.e. marijuana) are present?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**When at parties with recreational drugs (i.e. marijuana), do you use any?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**If a sexual assault has happened to you have you reported it to Rhode Island College?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**If a sexual assault has happened to you have you reported it to State, City or Town Police Office?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other:

**Information about Relationship Abuse and Sexual Assault**

If you would like to learn more about relationship abuse and/or sexual assault please visit one of the websites below. If you experience triggering effects from the survey please call one on the hotlines listed below (both local and national hotlines are provided):

**RIC Counseling Center**

Website: <https://www.ric.edu/counselingctr/>

Phone Number: 1-401-456-8094

Location: Craig Lee 130

The RIC Counseling Center helps with any difficulties of stress or other psychological problems that students may experience while attending Rhode Island College.

**Day One Rhode Island**

Website: <http://www.dayoneri.org/>

Hotline: 1-800-494-8100

Day One provides services to people who are victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, as well as other crimes. Day One is also an advocacy center for people who suffer from sexual assault, and domestic violence. They hope to help reduce that amount of these crimes in Rhode Island.

**Sojourner House**

Website: <http://www.sojournerri.org>

Hotline: 1-401-765-3232

Sojourner House is an advocacy center for people suffering from domestic violence. They offer a safe place where victims can go. They also do help people of the LGBT community.

**RAINN: Rape, Abuse, and Incest Nationwide Network**

Website: <http://www.rainn.org>

National Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE

RAINN is one of the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organizations. They help people who are victims from all types of sexual violence.

**Sexual Assault on Campuses: What Colleges and Universities are doing about It**

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/205521.pdf>

**Rhode Island College Annual Security Report: Sex Offenses and Procedures Following a Sex Offense**  
<https://www.ric.edu/campussecurityreport/#12>